

News

United States
Department
of Labor



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PLS – 4284

FOR RELEASE:

TUESDAY, MARCH 13, 2007

UNION MEMBERSHIP IN VIRGINIA, 2006

In 2006, 4.0 percent of wage and salary workers in Virginia were union members, down from 4.8 percent in 2005, according to the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics. Regional Commissioner Sheila Watkins noted that this year's union membership rate was the lowest in the 18 years of the data series. The union membership rate in Virginia has declined fairly steadily from its high of 9.3 percent in 1992. (See table 1.) Nationally, the union membership rate for wage and salary workers fell to 12.0 percent in 2006 from 12.5 percent in 2005. The union membership rate for the U.S. has declined from a high of 20.1 percent in 1983, the first year for which comparable national data were available. Virginia was one of 29 states that, along with the District of Columbia, had union membership rates below the U.S. average in 2006.

In Virginia, 139,000 wage and salary workers were union members in 2006. An additional 40,000 wage and salary workers were represented by a union on their main job, while not being union members themselves. Totals for both union members and those represented by unions were at their lowest levels since comparable data were first reported in 1989. Nationwide, nearly 15.4 million wage and salary workers were union members in 2006, while another 1.5 million wage and salary workers were represented by a union on their main job, but not union members themselves.

In 2006, 29 states and the District of Columbia had union membership rates below that of the U.S. average, 12.0 percent, while 20 states had higher rates and 1 state posted the same rate. (See table 2.) All states in the East South Central and West South Central divisions reported union membership rates below the national average, and all states in the East North Central, Middle Atlantic, and Pacific divisions had rates at or above that for the nation. In the South Atlantic division union membership rates were mixed, with six states (including Virginia) and Washington, D.C., having rates below the U.S. average and two states (Maryland and West Virginia) having rates above it. (See chart 1.) Over the year, union membership rates were down in 30 states (including Virginia) and the District of Columbia, up in 17 states, and unchanged in 3 states from 2005.

Virginia was among five states reporting union membership rates below 5.0 percent in 2006. North Carolina and South Carolina continued to post the lowest rates (3.3 percent each). Virginia (4.0 percent) recorded the next lowest rate, followed by Georgia (4.4 percent) and Texas (4.9 percent). Four states had union membership rates over 20.0 percent in 2006—Hawaii (24.7 percent), New York (24.4 percent), Alaska (22.2 percent), and New Jersey (20.1 percent). Hawaii and New York have recorded the highest union membership rates nationwide for 10 of the past 11 years.

Of the 15.4 million union members in the U.S. in 2006, 7.5 million, or just under half, lived in six states (California, 2.3 million; New York, 2.0 million; Illinois, 0.9 million; Michigan, 0.8 million; New Jersey, 0.8 million; and Pennsylvania, 0.7 million). Together, these six states accounted for about one-third of wage and salary employment nationally.

State union membership levels depend on both the union membership rate and the employment level. For example, Virginia and Hawaii had the same number of union members in 2006, even though Virginia's wage and salary employment level was more than six times that of Hawaii's.

Table 1. Union affiliation of employed wage and salary workers in Virginia, annual averages 1989-2006

(Numbers in thousands)

| Year | Total employed | Members of unions ¹ | | Represented by unions ² | |
|------|----------------|--------------------------------|---------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------|
| | | Total | Percent of employed | Total | Percent of employed |
| 1989 | 2,720 | 247 | 9.1 | 306 | 11.2 |
| 1990 | 2,781 | 232 | 8.3 | 301 | 10.8 |
| 1991 | 2,840 | 246 | 8.7 | 317 | 11.2 |
| 1992 | 2,900 | 271 | 9.3 | 357 | 12.3 |
| 1993 | 2,881 | 249 | 8.7 | 318 | 11.0 |
| 1994 | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a |
| 1995 | 3,001 | 201 | 6.7 | 267 | 8.9 |
| 1996 | 2,964 | 201 | 6.8 | 236 | 8.0 |
| 1997 | 2,962 | 193 | 6.5 | 220 | 7.4 |
| 1998 | 3,055 | 209 | 6.8 | 233 | 7.6 |
| 1999 | 3,107 | 204 | 6.6 | 249 | 8.0 |
| 2000 | 3,199 | 179 | 5.6 | 227 | 7.1 |
| 2001 | 3,233 | 163 | 5.0 | 209 | 6.5 |
| 2002 | 3,205 | 194 | 6.0 | 251 | 7.8 |
| 2003 | 3,243 | 210 | 6.5 | 251 | 7.7 |
| 2004 | 3,308 | 176 | 5.3 | 218 | 6.6 |
| 2005 | 3,406 | 165 | 4.8 | 211 | 6.2 |
| 2006 | 3,446 | 139 | 4.0 | 179 | 5.2 |

¹ Data refer to members of a labor union or an employee association similar to a union.

² Data refer to members of a labor union or an employee association similar to a union, as well as workers who are not members but whose jobs are covered by a union or employee association contract.

n/a - Not available

NOTE: Beginning in January 2006, data reflect revised population controls used in the household survey. Data refer to the sole or principal job of full- and part-time workers. Excluded are all self-employed workers regardless of whether or not their businesses are incorporated.

Technical Note

The estimates in this release are obtained from the Current Population Survey (CPS), which provides the basic information on the labor force, employment, and unemployment. The survey is conducted monthly for the Bureau of Labor Statistics by the U.S. Census Bureau from a scientifically selected sample of about 60,000 households nationwide. The union membership data are tabulated from one-quarter of the CPS monthly sample and are limited to wage and salary workers. All self-employed workers are excluded.

Union membership data, particularly levels, for any given year are not strictly comparable with data for other years because of the introduction of revised population controls used in the CPS. The effect of the revised population controls on the union membership estimates is unknown. However, as an example, the effect of the new controls on the monthly CPS estimates for the U.S. was to decrease the December 2005 employment level by 123,000 and the unemployment level by 8,000. The updated controls had little or no effect on unemployment rates and other ratios. For additional information, see "Adjustments to Household Survey Population Estimates in January 2006" in the February 2006 issue of Employment and Earnings, available on the Internet at <http://www.bls.gov/cps/cps06adj.pdf>.

For personal assistance or further information on union membership, as well as other Bureau programs, contact the Mid-Atlantic Information Office at 215-597-3282 from 8:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and 1:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. ET. Information in this release will be made available to sensory impaired individuals upon request. Voice phone: 202-691-5200, TDD message referral phone number: 1-800-877-8339.

Reliability of the estimates

Statistics based on the CPS are subject to both sampling and nonsampling error. When a sample, rather than the entire population, is surveyed, there is a chance that the sample estimates may differ from the "true" population values they represent. The exact difference, or sampling error, varies depending upon the particular sample selected, and this variability is measured by the standard error of the estimate. There is about a 90-percent chance, or level of confidence, that an estimate based on a sample will differ by no more than 1.6 standard errors from the "true" population value because of sampling error. BLS analyses are generally conducted at the 90-percent level of confidence.

The CPS data also are affected by nonsampling error. Nonsampling error can occur for many reasons, including the failure to sample a segment of the population, inability to obtain information for all respondents in the sample, inability or unwillingness of respondents to provide correct information, and errors made in the collection or processing of the data.

For a full discussion of the reliability of data from the CPS and information on estimating standard errors, see the "Explanatory Notes and Estimates of Error" section of *Employment and Earnings*.

Definitions

The principal definitions used in this release are described briefly below.

Union members. Data refer to members of a labor union or an employee association similar to a union.

Represented by unions. Data refer to union members, as well as workers who have no union affiliation but whose jobs are covered by a union or an employee association contract.

Wage and salary workers. Workers who receive wages, salaries, commissions, tips, payment in kind, or piece rates. The group includes employees in both the private and public sectors, but, for the purposes of the union membership and earnings series, excludes all self-employed persons, regardless of whether or not their businesses are incorporated.

Table 2. Union affiliation of employed wage and salary workers by state, 2005-2006

(Numbers in thousands)

| State | 2005 | | | | | 2006 | | | | |
|---------------------------|----------------|--------------------------------|---------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------|----------------|--------------------------------|---------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------|
| | Total employed | Members of unions ¹ | | Represented by unions ² | | Total employed | Members of unions ¹ | | Represented by unions ² | |
| | | Total | Percent of employed | Total | Percent of employed | | Total | Percent of employed | Total | Percent of employed |
| Alabama..... | 1,909 | 195 | 10.2 | 223 | 11.7 | 1,930 | 170 | 8.8 | 194 | 10.0 |
| Alaska..... | 275 | 63 | 22.8 | 66 | 24.1 | 280 | 62 | 22.2 | 67 | 23.8 |
| Arizona..... | 2,366 | 145 | 6.1 | 181 | 7.7 | 2,584 | 197 | 7.6 | 250 | 9.7 |
| Arkansas..... | 1,138 | 54 | 4.8 | 68 | 6.0 | 1,130 | 58 | 5.1 | 67 | 6.0 |
| California..... | 14,687 | 2,424 | 16.5 | 2,610 | 17.8 | 14,501 | 2,273 | 15.7 | 2,444 | 16.9 |
| Colorado..... | 2,052 | 170 | 8.3 | 193 | 9.4 | 2,154 | 165 | 7.7 | 186 | 8.6 |
| Connecticut..... | 1,550 | 247 | 15.9 | 263 | 17.0 | 1,591 | 247 | 15.6 | 263 | 16.5 |
| Delaware..... | 386 | 46 | 11.8 | 50 | 12.9 | 396 | 43 | 10.8 | 45 | 11.4 |
| District of Columbia..... | 259 | 29 | 11.3 | 33 | 12.8 | 246 | 25 | 10.3 | 30 | 12.2 |
| Florida..... | 7,389 | 401 | 5.4 | 532 | 7.2 | 7,676 | 397 | 5.2 | 497 | 6.5 |
| Georgia..... | 3,765 | 190 | 5.0 | 226 | 6.0 | 3,974 | 176 | 4.4 | 230 | 5.8 |
| Hawaii..... | 545 | 141 | 25.8 | 145 | 26.7 | 562 | 139 | 24.7 | 146 | 25.9 |
| Idaho..... | 606 | 31 | 5.2 | 38 | 6.3 | 620 | 37 | 6.0 | 45 | 7.2 |
| Illinois..... | 5,473 | 927 | 16.9 | 965 | 17.6 | 5,684 | 931 | 16.4 | 979 | 17.2 |
| Indiana..... | 2,789 | 346 | 12.4 | 368 | 13.2 | 2,787 | 334 | 12.0 | 362 | 13.0 |
| Iowa..... | 1,369 | 157 | 11.5 | 185 | 13.5 | 1,424 | 161 | 11.3 | 199 | 14.0 |
| Kansas..... | 1,210 | 85 | 7.0 | 115 | 9.5 | 1,236 | 99 | 8.0 | 115 | 9.3 |
| Kentucky..... | 1,696 | 164 | 9.7 | 184 | 10.8 | 1,752 | 172 | 9.8 | 196 | 11.2 |
| Louisiana..... | 1,778 | 114 | 6.4 | 132 | 7.4 | 1,676 | 107 | 6.4 | 121 | 7.2 |
| Maine..... | 582 | 69 | 11.9 | 79 | 13.6 | 584 | 69 | 11.9 | 79 | 13.5 |
| Maryland..... | 2,530 | 337 | 13.3 | 379 | 15.0 | 2,614 | 342 | 13.1 | 386 | 14.8 |
| Massachusetts..... | 2,886 | 402 | 13.9 | 431 | 14.9 | 2,859 | 414 | 14.5 | 438 | 15.3 |
| Michigan..... | 4,288 | 880 | 20.5 | 916 | 21.4 | 4,299 | 842 | 19.6 | 879 | 20.4 |
| Minnesota..... | 2,494 | 392 | 15.7 | 410 | 16.4 | 2,479 | 395 | 16.0 | 416 | 16.8 |
| Mississippi..... | 1,089 | 77 | 7.1 | 105 | 9.7 | 1,065 | 60 | 5.6 | 78 | 7.3 |
| Missouri..... | 2,532 | 290 | 11.5 | 319 | 12.6 | 2,610 | 284 | 10.9 | 310 | 11.9 |
| Montana..... | 391 | 42 | 10.7 | 48 | 12.2 | 397 | 48 | 12.2 | 52 | 13.1 |
| Nebraska..... | 830 | 69 | 8.3 | 79 | 9.5 | 831 | 66 | 7.9 | 79 | 9.5 |
| Nevada..... | 1,051 | 145 | 13.8 | 158 | 15.1 | 1,124 | 167 | 14.8 | 191 | 17.0 |
| New Hampshire..... | 627 | 65 | 10.4 | 72 | 11.5 | 620 | 63 | 10.1 | 70 | 11.3 |
| New Jersey..... | 3,868 | 791 | 20.5 | 838 | 21.7 | 3,827 | 770 | 20.1 | 825 | 21.6 |
| New Mexico..... | 777 | 63 | 8.1 | 83 | 10.7 | 796 | 62 | 7.8 | 92 | 11.5 |
| New York..... | 8,008 | 2,090 | 26.1 | 2,201 | 27.5 | 8,115 | 1,981 | 24.4 | 2,060 | 25.4 |
| North Carolina..... | 3,631 | 107 | 2.9 | 143 | 3.9 | 3,810 | 126 | 3.3 | 155 | 4.1 |
| North Dakota..... | 289 | 21 | 7.3 | 26 | 9.2 | 300 | 20 | 6.8 | 24 | 8.0 |
| Ohio..... | 5,039 | 804 | 16.0 | 866 | 17.2 | 5,170 | 734 | 14.2 | 801 | 15.5 |
| Oklahoma..... | 1,432 | 77 | 5.4 | 91 | 6.4 | 1,453 | 93 | 6.4 | 112 | 7.7 |
| Oregon..... | 1,470 | 213 | 14.5 | 231 | 15.7 | 1,527 | 211 | 13.8 | 225 | 14.7 |
| Pennsylvania..... | 5,456 | 753 | 13.8 | 818 | 15.0 | 5,457 | 745 | 13.6 | 802 | 14.7 |
| Rhode Island..... | 494 | 79 | 15.9 | 83 | 16.8 | 498 | 76 | 15.3 | 79 | 16.0 |
| South Carolina..... | 1,739 | 40 | 2.3 | 58 | 3.3 | 1,775 | 59 | 3.3 | 74 | 4.2 |
| South Dakota..... | 350 | 21 | 5.9 | 29 | 8.2 | 351 | 21 | 5.9 | 25 | 7.2 |
| Tennessee..... | 2,368 | 128 | 5.4 | 156 | 6.6 | 2,550 | 153 | 6.0 | 174 | 6.8 |
| Texas..... | 9,485 | 506 | 5.3 | 590 | 6.2 | 9,751 | 476 | 4.9 | 576 | 5.9 |
| Utah..... | 1,035 | 51 | 4.9 | 63 | 6.1 | 1,121 | 61 | 5.4 | 69 | 6.1 |
| Vermont..... | 287 | 31 | 10.8 | 37 | 13.0 | 305 | 34 | 11.0 | 39 | 12.9 |
| Virginia..... | 3,406 | 165 | 4.8 | 211 | 6.2 | 3,446 | 139 | 4.0 | 179 | 5.2 |
| Washington..... | 2,746 | 523 | 19.1 | 559 | 20.4 | 2,772 | 549 | 19.8 | 583 | 21.0 |
| West Virginia..... | 688 | 99 | 14.4 | 107 | 15.5 | 710 | 101 | 14.2 | 110 | 15.5 |
| Wisconsin..... | 2,551 | 410 | 16.1 | 438 | 17.2 | 2,587 | 386 | 14.9 | 415 | 16.1 |
| Wyoming..... | 228 | 18 | 7.9 | 22 | 9.5 | 235 | 19 | 8.3 | 24 | 10.0 |

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NOTE: Beginning in January 2006, data reflect revised population controls used in the household survey. Data refer to the sole or principal job of full-and part-time workers. Excluded are all self-employed workers regardless of whether or not their businesses are incorporated.

Chart 1. Union membership rates by state, 2006 annual averages

(U.S. rate = 12.0 percent)

